DID AIR INDIA ALLOW 90 CREW MEMBERS TO SKIP COMPULSORY MEDICAL CHECK?

News / Airlines

To ensure that flight operations during the Haj season are not hampered, Air India has allowed around 90 crew members to skip the mandatory medical check-up.

According to rules, the crew will not be allowed to fly without certificates that say that they have undergone the check-up. If licences expire -- as in this case -- the airline could be short of crew, hampering flight operations. The Haj operations, which will involve 230 direct flights from seven Indian cities to Jeddah, will carry nearly 40,000 pilgrims.

This is the second time the airline has ignored rules about cabin crew fitness. Last week, to avoid flight disruptions, the airline's in-flight services department woke up to the fact that a section of its flight attendants had not got vaccinated for yellow fever and meningitis. Saudi Arabia's health ministry had sent an advisory for the vaccinations more than a month ago.

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A circular issued by Dr PC Tripathi, the airline's general manager and head of medical services on August 25, asked his office to extend the validity of fit-to-fly licences of cabin crew personnel expiring between August 25 and October 31. HT has a copy of the circular.

According to rules set by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), flight attendants have to undergo a medical check-up periodically. Cabin crew personnel aged below 40 have to undergo the check once in two years and the rest have to do it every year. "How can the airline extend the validity without conducting the tests? What if a flight purser takes ill on duty and is incapacitated to handle a mid-air emergency?" said a senior AI official, requesting anonymity.

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A medical check validity of the cabin crew is for a period/duration as prescribed by DGCA in CAR and is based on the age of the cabin crew concerned, which is once in four years for crew up to 40 years, once in two years thereafter up to the age of 50 years, and every year thereafter. The medical department gives validity as per the above norms. Hence, there was no violation and there has been no safety lapse at all, and the crew is required to undergo medical checks as and when required."

What Air India says

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